



# Clarendon Courthouse Civic Association

30 November 2020

Members of the School Board and Superintendent Duran,

The Clarendon-Courthouse Civic Association (planning units 24100, 24110, 24111, 24120, 24140, and 24080) (the “CCCA”) strongly opposes the Superintendent’s Elementary School Boundary Recommendation with School Board Adjustments that was posted on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (the “Adjusted Recommendation”). The Adjusted Recommendation fails to adhere to Arlington Public Schools (“APS”) considerations in the formation of school boundaries and severely limits APS’s flexibility in addressing overcapacity in the next boundary process. Indeed, it does not accomplish the goals that the comprehensive countywide boundary-adjustment (involving moving three schools in the process) was intended to accomplish. At bottom, it has several deeply concerning long-term consequences for the residents of our association, it fails to consider the interests of our APS students, and undermines the financial interests of our county.

We respectfully request voting against the Adjusted Recommendation and reconsider other options for the following reasons:

- ***The Adjusted Recommendation Provides NO Stability for Students of Our Civic Association.*** In the Adjusted Recommendation, the CCCA is the only portion of the current Arlington Science Focus School (“ASFS”) population to remain zoned at the school. The rest (over 80% of the current ASFS population) move to the New School at Key and a small segment of 27 students are reassigned to Taylor. The APS principle of stability is grounded in the concept that children should not have to change school communities more than once in any stage (elementary school, middle school, high school). For the students in the CCCA, even though they are remaining zoned for ASFS, they are not moving with the ASFS community and with their social cohort to the New School at Key. The number of current ASFS students who are not moving to the New School at Key is not higher than the number of students being added to ASFS from either Ashlawn or Taylor. **This undoubtedly is a boundary reassignment for the CCCA children.** In contrast, the majority of the ASFS student body who will be moving to the New School at Key will be moving in unison with no new infusion of students from another school. Furthermore, APS staff have stated that the Accreditation of ASFS would move to the New School at Key with this population and that ASFS would have to be reaccredited because the accreditation moves with the

population of the school.<sup>1</sup> Thus, for all practical purposes “ASFS” is the “new” school.

Yet, in the APS FAQs<sup>2</sup>, it states that the students who remain at ASFS are *not* involved in a boundary change, while the population moving to the New School at Key is guaranteed that they will not be affected in the subsequent boundary change planned for 2022. The slides that accompany the release of the Adjusted Recommendation<sup>3</sup> state in bold red—and in no uncertain terms—that the ASFS boundary **will** be adjusted in the next boundary process to resolve the projected overcrowding. In the boundary process for 2022, the CCCA planning units are the **only** ones that can be moved out of ASFS to relieve overcrowding since they were “untouched” according to APS reasoning. *It is clear that the current APS plan is for CCCA families to switch school communities in this boundary process, only to again be reassigned in two years in the planned boundary process in 2022.*

Two years ago, Ms. Stengle characterized a proposed boundary of ASFS as a “new community” as a justification for the Key/ASFS building swap during a work session on elementary boundaries. The ASFS boundary she was referring to that was shown for discussion purposes is identical to the one currently being proposed. What has changed between now and then?

We ask that you take one of the following actions: (1) recognize and confirm at this time that the students from the CCCA remaining at ASFS have been reassigned to a new school community under this process and to apply your stability consideration when you make further boundary adjustments in two years; or (2) add a clarification to the Adjusted Recommendation indicating that all students who have been assigned to ASFS boundaries will need to stay fixed for the next five years and make sure that all those you have assigned to the “new” ASFS fit within the building capacity for the next five years. If there is *any* intention of moving the CCCA planning units in two years, we reiterate our prior requests to move us with the entire ASFS population in the current boundary process

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Summary-of-Initial-Boundary-Proposal-Draft-1-10.5.2020.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.apsva.us/engage/fall2020elementaryboundaries/frequently-asked-questions-fall-2020-es-boundaries/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Prez\\_Supt-Recommendation-for-ES-Boundaries-w-SB-Adjustments\\_2020\\_1124.pdf](https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Prez_Supt-Recommendation-for-ES-Boundaries-w-SB-Adjustments_2020_1124.pdf), slide 18 (“Fall 2022 Boundary Process (to take effect 2023-24) will make additional adjustments to ASFS boundaries”).

to the New School at Key, which is walkable for the entire CCCA community and to which we should have been rightfully zoned.<sup>4</sup>

- **The Adjusted Recommendation Does NOT Allow CCCA Students to Walk to Their School.** The majority of the CCCA is within the walk zone for the New School at Key, and for many a ten-to-fifteen-minute walk to ASFS though they are not part of its walk zone. It is not possible for the CCCA to walk to any other elementary schools; the only other proximate school is Long Branch, which is not walkable from the CCCA because it involves crossing 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Washington Blvd, both four-to-six-lane streets. Both of these high traffic streets are considered not crossable for elementary age students. In fact, many adults are apprehensive of crossing them.

Additionally, as you may know, the Clarendon and Courthouse neighborhoods have had available parking reduced significantly as part of the county's plan to strategically reduce parking in areas near the metro. Many of our residents do not have a car, and do not have access to free parking. The proposed plan does not promote walkability—and actually undercuts it—in (ironically) the most walkable part of the county. Furthermore, the APS future plan of zoning the CCCA to a school other than the New School at Key or ASFS will make it impossible for families to live in the CCCA car free. This is contrary to the long range planning the county has done for our neighborhood, will lead to an increase in traffic and cars for our neighborhood, and contravenes environmental interests.

Moreover, it is fiscally irresponsible to not take advantage of the walkability in the Courthouse/Clarendon neighborhood by not zoning planning units that are within the walk zone to the New School at Key. Indeed, the entire county will be taxed on the expense of requiring busing for CCCA residents who can walk to a school in their backyard.<sup>5</sup>

- **The Adjusted Recommendation Does NOT Balance Enrollment Effectively between Schools.** Per APS's slides that accompany it (e.g., slide 18), the Adjusted Recommendation leaves Taylor at less than 77% capacity, while both ASFS and the New School at Key are over capacity (greater than 121% and 103%, respectively) by 2023. In addition, though

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<sup>4</sup> The entire CCCA is the only segment of the walk zone that has not been assigned to the New School at Key under the Adjusted Recommendation.

<sup>5</sup> In addition, in-person schooling will be returning while our county is extracting itself out of a pandemic. Students who can easily and safely walk to school will be forced to take the unnecessary risk of riding a bus and being in a confined space.

the Adjusted Recommendation claims that ASFS will be at 105% enrollment next fall, this does NOT include the fifth graders who will be grandfathered (72 students) and the immersion students who may decide to attend their neighborhood school (80 students) rather than travel further to attend an immersion program that is 157% above capacity. Indeed, the Adjusted Recommendation may leave ASFS at 133% above capacity upon initial implementation. Furthermore, the proposed plan severely limits the adjustments APS can make in the future to remediate this imbalance – the planning units moved in this iteration cannot be added back to either Taylor or Ashlawn.

- **The Adjusted Recommendation Does NOT Balance Diversity Effectively between Schools.** The proposed changes further segregate school populations. Per APS calculations, the New School at Key will be at 27% F/RL, while both ASFS and Taylor are below 8% F/RL. It is also worth noting that the F/RL projections for the New School at Key are likely inaccurate and unreported. At a work session, Ms. Stengle clarified that the F/RL projections for the New School at Key did not include Queen’s Court, which is expected to generate a significant number of APS students that will likely place the F/RL at over 40%. It is abhorrent and not reflective of our community ideals to have this level of economic segregation between schools that are proximate to one another. The Adjusted Recommendation moves the majority of the committed affordable housing currently zoned to Taylor out. It places all the affordable housing in Rosslyn at the New School at Key. APS must amend its proposal to better manage diversity, especially since the Adjusted Recommendation significantly limits options for addressing this in the future. While managing diversity has always been an important goal, it is of the utmost importance in today’s world.

In conclusion, the CCCA does not support the Adjusted Recommendation posted on November 24<sup>th</sup>, as it relates to our planning units. APS must commit to promoting stability and diversity in its future proposals, either by affirming as part of the proposal that the CCCA planning units have been “reassigned” by this boundary change and cannot be moved again in 2022, or by moving the CCCA planning units to the New School at Key with the rest of the ASFS community.

Though it is our least favored option since it does not deal with the diversity imbalance in our area and it will not give us a respite from another boundary process in the future, we are reluctantly in favor of the School Board adopting Option B for the Superintendent’s Recommendation of School Boundaries that was proposed by APS staff for the 10/29/2020 discussion at the School Board

work session. Option B at the very least maintains the most flexibility for a comprehensive boundary process in a couple of years while not leaving us with an unmanageable overcapacity problem.

We implore you to reconsider the newest proposal, which unfairly targets the CCCA residents to the detriment of the broader community.

Sincerely,  
Clarendon Courthouse Civic Association

Casey Nolan  
President

CC: Clarendon Courthouse Civic Association membership